digital microwave media. Local call facility is not admissible between the two SDCAs under the existing rules.

(b) There is no delay in providing group dialling facilities in West Bengal Circle as most of the exchanges have been covered. The facility to remaining exchanges is being extended progressively on availability of equipment and transmission media.

Loss Suffered by Railways Due to Cyclone

861. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether during the period of cyclone and rains in the Andhra Pradesh during 1996, the major railway tracks and lines were affected;

(b) if so, the total loss suffered by the railways due to the cyclone and rains;

(c) whether all the railway lines that were damaged have been repaired by now; and

(d) if so, the total expenditure incurred thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) about Rs. 7.20 crore.

(c) All the damaged Lines have since been restored on temporary basis and permanent restoration work is in progress.

(d) Rs. 7.20 crore (approx.) have been incurred on temporary restoration work. Permanent restoration work would cost about Rs. 19.90 crore.

Closure of Unmanned Level Crossings

862. SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA :
SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN :

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Government have decided to close down a large number of unmanned/ manned level crossings in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, zone-wise;

(c) whether the Government are considering to provide alternative roads before closing these level crossings;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b)

Railway	Number of level crossings
1	2
Central	46
Eastern	19
Northern	85
North Eastern	93
Northeast Frontier	103
Southern	117
South Central	37
South Eastern	8
Western	28
Total	536

(c) Yes, Sir. Wherever necessary the level crossing will be closed after completion of required formalities.

(d) 65 level crossing roads will be passed through existing nearby bridge. 351 level crossings will be linked to nearby level crossings.

(e) 120 level crossings will be closed, since road traffic is either absent or very meagre which does not justify their continuance.

Fire in Bhopal-Bound Shatabdi Express

863. SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether a fire broke out in Bhopal-Bound Shatabdi Express on January 18, 1997;

(b) if so, the main cause of the accident; and

(c) the measures taken by the Government to check such incidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A fire broke out in the under-frame of the generator-cum-luggage van of 2002 New Delhi-Bhopal Shatabdi Express at Ajhai station on New Delhi-Agra section of Central Railway on 18.1.1997. The incident of fire is being enquired into by the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Central Circle, whose findings are awaited.

(c) The following steps have been taken to prevent similar accidents :-

(i) Proper maintenance of electric fittings in all passenger coaches is being ensured at the time of overhauling.

(ii) Checks are carried out at maintenance depots to ensure proper electrical fittings and smooth working of the alarm chain apparatus in passenger carrying trains;

(iii) Passengers are not allowed to carry inflammable materials on the trains;

(iv) Portable fire extinguishers are provided in locomotives, brake-vans, AC coaches, pantry cars and the generator vans for prompt tackling of fire;